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MATERIAL FROM ENGLISH LITERATURE ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS.

- I. THE SABBATH. II. THE PRESENT AND THE FINAL DOOM OF THE GOOD AND THE WICKED. III. JOHN BEHEADED IV. CHRIST THE SON OF GOD.
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I. *The Sabbath*.—A quaint poem on the Sabbath is Herbert's "O, Day, most calm, most bright." Vaughan in "Sun-Dayes" has conceits even more fanciful. Sundays are the steps by which we climb above the ages, the pulleys that draw us to heaven, lamps to light our "heap of days," hives of honey. Sunday is

Transplanted paradise ; God's walking houre ;
The cool o' the day !

Whittier in "First-Day Thoughts" gives a picture of "calm and cool and silence," where are no organ, no hymn, no censer, no dim light, but where the still small voice speaks to the heart the law of God. In his "Pennsylvania Pilgrim" there is a beautiful description of the "Fair First-Day Mornings:"

With no peal
To call them to the house of praise,
The scattered settlers through green forest-ways
Walked meeting-ward.
Lowly before the Unseen Presence knelt
Each waiting heart, till haply some one felt
On his moved lips the seal of silence melt,
Or, without spoken words, low breathings stole
Of a diviner life from soul to soul.

The real theme in this lesson, however, is not the Sabbath. It is rather the true relation between the external act and the spirit that prompts it. The Pharisees strictly observed set rules, but did not thereby really keep the Sabbath. Christ broke these rules, yet he and his disciples kept the Sabbath in the true sense. Crashaw has a trenchant, epigrammatic little poem which illustrates this thought of the right subordination of external to spiritual values:

Two went to pray. Or rather say,
One went to brag, the other to pray.

One stands up close, and treads on high,
 Where the other dares not send his eye.
 One nearer to God's altar trod,
 The other to the altar's God.

The stress which the Pharisees put on formal observances, the spirit of which they failed to receive into their lives, finds further apt illustration in Herrick's poem on "A True Lent":

Is this a fast — to keep
 The larder lean,
 And clean,
 From fat of veals and sheep?
 * * * * *
 No! 'tis a fast to dole
 Thy sheaf of wheat,
 And meat,
 Unto the hungry soul.
 It is to fast from strife,
 From old debate,
 And hate—
 To circumsise thy life.
 To show a heart grief-rent;
 To starve thy sin,
 Not bin;
 And that's to keep thy Lent.

Such poems as these doubtless represent the real thought of the lesson more truly than do poems directly on the Sabbath.

II. *The present and the final doom of the good and the wicked.*—A general statement of the theme of this lesson is that a man's ultimate fate is determined by his character, but that in this life external circumstances may combine to give him more of prosperity or of adversity than properly belongs to him. The classic literary treatment of the relation between sin and its future punishment is Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In its three parts the poem represents three possible attitudes of the soul toward sin. In the "Inferno" the soul suffers for sins unrepented; in the "Purgatorio" consciousness of sin leads to an attempt to turn from sin; the "Paradiso" represents the forgiven soul in happy union with God.

In Milton's *Paradise Lost* we have in the picture of the fallen angels a magnificent concrete representation of the final doom of those who fight against the will of God. The present doom of the wicked is symbolized by the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden. The final salvation of those who accept Christ is portrayed in *Paradise Regained*.

In Goethe's *Faust* we have another great study of human destiny. In the first part is outlined the career of a soul delivered up to the mad pursuit of pleasure. He is willing to sell his soul for happiness. But desires recklessly and fearlessly followed lead to sins for which, even on this earth, his remorse is a doom almost as terrible as that awaiting him in the life to come.

In the second part of the poem there seems to be a change ; in some way not very clearly manifest, Faust is shown as less and less under the power of Satan, and in the end the angels of heaven rescue Faust's soul, and the devil is baffled.

In Southey's *Curse of Kehama* the quaint motto, "Curses, like chickens, come home to roost," gives the keynote of the play.

"The New Jerusalem," beginning "O mother dear, Jerusalem," Faber's "O Paradise," and "The Pilgrims of the Night," and "The Celestial Country," by Bernard de Cluny, are perhaps the best known of the poems on the joys of the saved in heaven. Portions of this last poem, as "Jerusalem the Golden," and "For Thee, oh Dear, Dear Country," are used as hymns.

The part of this theme that finds expression in modern literature is the present rather than the future doom of the wicked, and this doom is made internal and spiritual. However favoring external circumstances remain, the wicked man exemplifies the words of Milton's Satan : "Which way I fly is hell ; myself am hell." Browning's Andrea del Sarto, George Eliot's Godfrey Cass in *Silas Marner*, and her Tito Melema in *Romola*, are good examples of the modern study of sin and its present results.

III. *John beheaded*.—In this lesson superstitious terrors and weak love for an unworthy woman lead Herod to sacrifice a man who stands as the prophet of the thought that is to save the world. Evil is temporarily victorious, but the death of John, when taken in connection with the after-history of Herod and of the cause John championed, makes the true theme of this lesson, the success that lies hidden in some kinds of failure. "The failures of some men are eternities beyond the successes of others," says George MacDonald. The thought is expressed in some noble lines by Joaquim Miller :

O great is the hero who wins a name ;
But greater, many and many a time,
Some pale-faced fellow who dies in shame
And lets God finish the thought sublime.

Of Schill, the Prussian patriot who died in a vain attempt to liberate Germany, Wordsworth writes that, whether the nations shall count his name sublime or not, there is a Judge

To whose all-pondering mind a noble aim,
Faithfully kept, is as a noble deed ;
In whose pure sight all virtue does succeed.

Lowell, in "A Glance behind the Curtain," makes Cromwell say :

All true, whole men succeed ; for what is worth
Success's name, unless it be the thought,
The inward surety, to have carried out
A noble purpose to a noble end,
Although it be the gallows or the block.

Lowell had strong sympathy with all who stood by the right at personal cost. In "Kossuth" the hero says :

I was the chosen trump where through
 Our God sent forth awakening breath.
 Came chains ? Came death ? The strain He blew
 Sounds on, outliving chains and death.

See, also, his "Commemoration Ode" for a splendid tribute to those who gave life itself to seal their faith in some ideal good, who, set on fire from heaven, chose danger and disdained shame. In "The Present Crisis" he comments anew and in a jubilant strain on the real victory of those who perish for the right :

Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne —
 Yet that scaffold sways the future, and behind the dim unknown
 Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.

Wordsworth speaks with the same exalted confidence to Toussaint L'Overture, who, his cause overthrown, was himself dying in an unknown Paris dungeon :

Though fallen thyself never to rise again,
 Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
 Powers that will work for thee — air, earth, and skies —
 There's not a breathing of the common wind
 That will forget thee. Thou hast great allies ;
 Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
 And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

IV. *Christ the Son of God*.—Christ, through his great works and his greater spirit, had planted deep in the hearts of his disciples a belief in his divine nature. To them he was the Son of the Living God. Arthur Hugh Clough has a poem in which he describes the eagerness of people to hear Jesus :

Across the sea, along the shore,
 In numbers more and ever more,
 From lonely hut and busy town,
 The valley through, the mountain down,
 What was it ye went out to see,
 Ye silly folk of Galilee ?

When the questioner finds that all the crowd hurries to see merely "a young man preaching in a boat," he wonders still more and asks, "whence he hath learned to speak ? Who gave him his doctrine ? Why is he preferred to the recognized teachers of Israel ?" The answer is :

He teacheth with authority,
 And not as do the scribes.

Whittier in "Our Master" speaks of Christ as

Most human and yet most divine,
 The flower of Man and God !

and closes with the invocation,

O Lord and Master of us all !
 Whate'er our name or sign,
 We own thy sway, we hear thy call,
 We test our lives by thine.

We faintly hear, we dimly see,
 In differing phrase we pray ;
 But dim or clear, we own in Thee
 The Light, the Truth, the Way.

Elizabeth Barret Browning in "The Dead Pan" represents Christ's death on the cross as the supreme event by which his sole Godhead rose complete, and as a result of which all the false gods of heathen nations "fell down moaning" :

All the false gods with a cry
 Rendered up their deity —
 Pan, Pan was dead.
 'Twas the hour when One in Zion
 Hung for love's sake on a cross ;
 When His brow was chill with dying,
 And His soul was faint with loss ;
 When his priestly blood dropped downward,
 And his kingly eyes looked throne-ward,
 Then, Pan was dead.

The real humanity and the divine power mingled in the nature of Christ are well expressed in Browning's "Saul." David loves Saul and would save him, but feels himself impotent. In Christ alone is there salvation for Saul, and David exclaims,

O Saul, it shall be
 A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me
 Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever : a Hand like this hand
 Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the Christ stand !

Best of all is the "Prologue" to Tennyson's "In Memoriam" :

Strong Son of God, immortal Love,
 Whom we, that have not seen thy face,
 By faith, and faith alone, embrace,
 Believing where we cannot prove ;
 * * * * *
 Thou seemest human and divine,
 The highest, holiest manhood, thou ;
 Our wills are ours, we know not how ;
 Our wills are ours to make them thine.